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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.



VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

October 1, 1946

For your information

TO ALL ASSISTANT STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS, VFV:

Subject: News Letter

SEPTEMBER STORY

"School started and took away almost all our bean pickers." Out in Whatcom County, Washington, that's their story for early September, with a prediction that they "will probably suffer from the loss of pickers."

It's not a new refrain--this report from the Northwest. We hear it on all sides when school doors open each autumn. We've heard it this fall from Pennsylvania where they say the youngsters' "places will have to be filled by older workers." Georgia faces the problem for cotton harvest, but they've made arrangements with schools to release town youth part time. And in Berks County, Pennsylvania, they've also made arrangements with the schools to get VFV help for a heavy peach crop.

Yes, we have pretty good assurance that even this year many schools will stand by the farmers. But the coincidence of school and harvest time in September and October brings up an old problem. Can we justify taking youth away from their classes? In cases of emergency, the answer may be yes. But all farm labor people should be just as concerned as are the schools in seeing that there are arrangements for making up class work missed. And we owe it to our youth to weigh carefully our requests to the schools for harvest labor.

We've every kind of proof that schoolmen put high value on what VFV's learn in doing farm work. On the other hand, algebra and English history are bound to suffer when a youngster is out picking up potatoes for 2 weeks. As I see it, if we can keep the "kids" out of school for 2 weeks and count no loss, then our schools leave something to be desired. But there is a loss, as borne out in a survey of New York State school principals in 1943. Although some principals questioned believed that the children gained from farm experience, most of them thought the work missed could never adequately be made up, especially by the average or below-average pupils. Here's something to think about when we're casting about for an autumn labor source.

As H.W. Herbison, North Dakota's farm labor supervisor once expressed it, "We must be looking forward to a better farm labor supply arrangement for late fall harvesting than that of drafting our kids out of the classroom for week after week after week--or else get together with the school people and change our 'school year' around a bit to fit our agriculture."

JULY YOUTH PLACEMENTS UP

Seasonal youth placements for the Nation are not running quite up to last year's figures. You've probably guessed that from VFV placements in your own State. But judging by July reports, we may place about as many youth in 1946--for July seasonal placements were 97.8 percent of 1945. Last July we placed 207,610 young people; this July, 203,039--not counting year-round VFV's. Year-round placements are down more than seasonal.

ABOUT THAT QUOTATION

The quotation from Roger W. Babson on the first page of our last news letter (dated September 3) left the impression with a few readers that we endorsed the entire paragraph. Our interest in the columnist's words lay chiefly in the sentence stating that "habits of work should be taught in our public schools along with French, Latin, music, and the so-called social studies." By quoting the whole paragraph, we did not mean to conclude with Mr. Babson that "we should get the laws changed so as to encourage the vacation employment of young people." We do not actually know what he means by this suggestion. But if he calls for repealing the hard-won gains made in child-labor legislation, we certainly cannot go along with him.

On what position do we stand regarding work for youth? Whenever young people do work, we contend that it must be under favorable conditions and wise supervision. Otherwise, work experience for youth would have no value educationally, in the sense that it contributes to the young person's wholesome development. Furthermore, without age limits and other restrictions, employment can be highly detrimental, as we all know.

THANKS FOR HELPING

In recently taking stock of the VFV pictures we now have on hand, we find ourselves pretty proud of some of the new acquisitions in the way of glossy prints. We hope to put them to good use. And we certainly do appreciate all the help we got from you and some of your staff members in acquiring pictures this year.

WAGE TALKS

VFV wages is a vital subject that mayhap does not get enough airing. We're all concerned with it. And it ought to go without saying that whether youngsters embark on their summer farm job for the earnings or just the experience they've got fair wages coming to them.

Several States with "live-in" programs have set wage minimums, but these have tended to become the established wage even after youth are no longer "green" hands. Are we taking advantage of VFV's in setting minimums?

Farm labor assistants, and county youth supervisors in Vermont tackled this question when they met in Burlington, August 15. Improved supervision, placement, travel procedures, and other items were on the agenda, but you'll be interested in some of the group's conclusions on wages.

The group recommended a raise in minimum pay from \$30 to \$35 a month. For veteran VFV's it set a new minimum of \$45 for second-year youth and \$55 for third-year VFV's. On the theory that a better weight and age scale would adjust the wage scale more easily, it also recommended that VFV's weigh at least 130 pounds and be at least 15. And it was decided that bonuses should be suggested to farmers for satisfactory work.

This Burlington meeting, which Mrs. Martha Buttrick holds with county people at the end of each summer, strikes me as a good idea. It's the best time of year to catch county supervisors full of ideas for improving things for the next summer.

\$3,555 WORTH OF WEEDS

I never thought of valuing weeds in the thousands of dollars--but farmers in Minnehaha County, South Dakota, paid \$3,555.39 in wages alone to get rid of them this summer. That's what "kid" crews recruited in Sioux Falls earned for cleaning cockleburrs out of cornfields. Sioux Falls VFFV's also worked in soybeans and detasseled corn during the summer--all under the supervision of Eiton H. Bissel, a local schoolman turned VFFV labor assistant for the vacation months.

Bissel says "the idea of crew managers was new with us this summer but it certainly worked out well."

PITTSBURGH REPORT

The smoky city of Pittsburgh has had an increasing number of VFFV's each year, what with sending recruits to Connecticut and Vermont the past few summers. Now we hear that 55 boys from the Pittsburgh vo-ag class have been working on farms this summer as Pennsylvania VFFV's. A few others from the class worked in other States. Both the boys and farmers seemed well satisfied with the experience. Pennsylvania sees possibilities in vo-ag classes for city schools because of farmers' increasing dependence on teen-age boys for help.

MORE FOR THE RECORD

for 1946:

We're never short on reports of "kid" accomplishments. But just to add to the record--here are some of their doings

One day in Lorain County, Ohio, 232 youth were placed on vegetable farms.... Corn detasseling in another Ohio county (Fairfield) was worked out with permanent crews of six boys to one supervisor--which sounds like good supervision.... Rock County, Wisconsin, recruited 889 boys and girls for detasseling, plus 47 adult supervisors and 108 youth for other farm work. A total of 376 Milwaukee youth were placed on farm jobs--and hundreds of other Wisconsin VFFV's worked in beans and other vegetables....Sixty West Virginia men and boys went to the Mountain State's eastern panhandle to pick peaches in August. C. P. Dorsey tells us that there was a supervisor for each 15 boys....By August, Michigan VFFV placements totaled 61,246 for 1946. Of these, 563 were "live-aways," as Doris Shimkus and the Michigan folks call them....A Massachusetts fruit grower has asked for 30 Boston boys to pick his apples for the fourth successive year.

VFFV IN PRINT

"Nebraska Youths Tackle Detasseling Job"--full-page feature in the Lincoln, Nebr., Sunday Journal and Star, August 4, by

George S. Round, University of Nebraska public relations director. Eight excellent pictures accompany the article, which tells a fine story of the 3,000 to 4,000 boys and girls who worked in the hot sun in some 10 Nebraska counties.

BIG SAVINGS

When you hear about the saving on cost being "astonishing" it's worth looking into. That's what Georgia says about the group insurance plan used at the Zebulon 4-H Negro camp, where the boys picked peaches and carried on a 4-H Club program at the same time.

The Georgia camp chose the group plan which cost 5 cents a day for each day worked and totaled \$56.25 for 2 months' coverage. The \$1.50 monthly plan for 116 boys would have cost \$298. That is astonishing! The simplicity of the group plan appealed to the leaders too.

A SURVEY'S A GOOD IDEA

The May issue of New York State's Industrial Bulletin (N.Y. State Department of Labor publication) was interesting reading, even if it took a while to reach my desk. The issue was devoted to agricultural labor, including articles about youth on farms. Copies have been sent to your director and farm labor supervisor.

Chiefly Noted: A survey by the Department of Labor of 2,600 day-haul workers, almost all under 18 years of age. The survey is enlightening enough in itself, but I mention it especially because I think such surveys are worth trying elsewhere. We need much more information about the entire Nation's agricultural day-hauls. It's significant that interviewers found the best conditions in day-hauls operated by the Extension Service. But not surprising. It does raise the question why so many day-hauls go unsupervised by Extension when conditions on such hauls are often far from satisfactory.

On unsupervised day-hauls, the survey shows some 10 percent under 10 years of age, 11 tots under 6. Of course, more than half were accompanied by an older member of the family. Conditions of travel and trucks were not good in many of the hauls, according to the article. And one-fourth of the children worked more than 8 hours a day, not counting transportation time.

Extension has corrected many conditions of this type of day-haul in other States as well as New York. But we all know about day-hauls still crying for improvement. A survey like that in New York would help us see what needs to be done.

GETTING IT DONE IN OREGON

Add testimony for reliance Oregon farmers put on platoons: Marion County (Salem), Oregon, placed 2,421 platoon youth during August in beans, peaches, onions, and blackberries, says Russel Adams. The number's 1,000 higher than last year's placements, and 1,000 higher than any month since the platoon system started in Marion County. Platoons you know, are organized and employed as supervised units.

IDEA DEPARTMENT

Athens, Georgia, business men are sponsoring a cotton-picking contest to promote harvest of the crop and prevent losses in the field. Among other awards there are a \$50 and a \$25 war bond for boys and girls in both the white and Negro classifications....Michigan plans a mimeographed "newspaper" for all-summer "live-aways" when they get back to school.... An Oregon platoon leader reserved a local roller rink for three bean-picking platoons and got the 100 youngsters home in time to get a good night's sleep before work the next day.

EVEN NEWSPAPERS DISCUSS IT

Work experience for youth is often a technical subject for school people.

But now it's getting into daily newspaper columns. The Burlington (Vermont) Free Press carried a series of four articles on the subject last month, and a few quotes from them are worth your attention:

"The lack of regular chores or of productive and gainful occupation outside of school hours has been the most detrimental factor in city life for millions of boys in the Nation...."

"Educators are not listening to vague fears about a mythical exploited youngster in some other State. They are considering the very recent work-experience of high school boys and girls in their own communities."

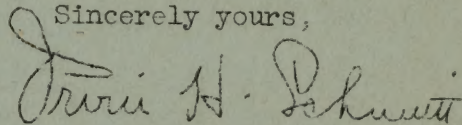
"The carefully coordinated plan of work experience which is coming into vogue may lead....to a higher percentage of students keeping interested and finishing high school courses."

OUR MAILING LIST

addresses, let us know.

We're revising our mailing list for this news letter. If you'd like us to add, subtract, or alter any names or

Sincerely yours,



Irvin H. Schmitt, Chief
Victory Farm Volunteers Division
Extension Farm Labor Program

(Copy to State supervisors,
editors, directors)

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